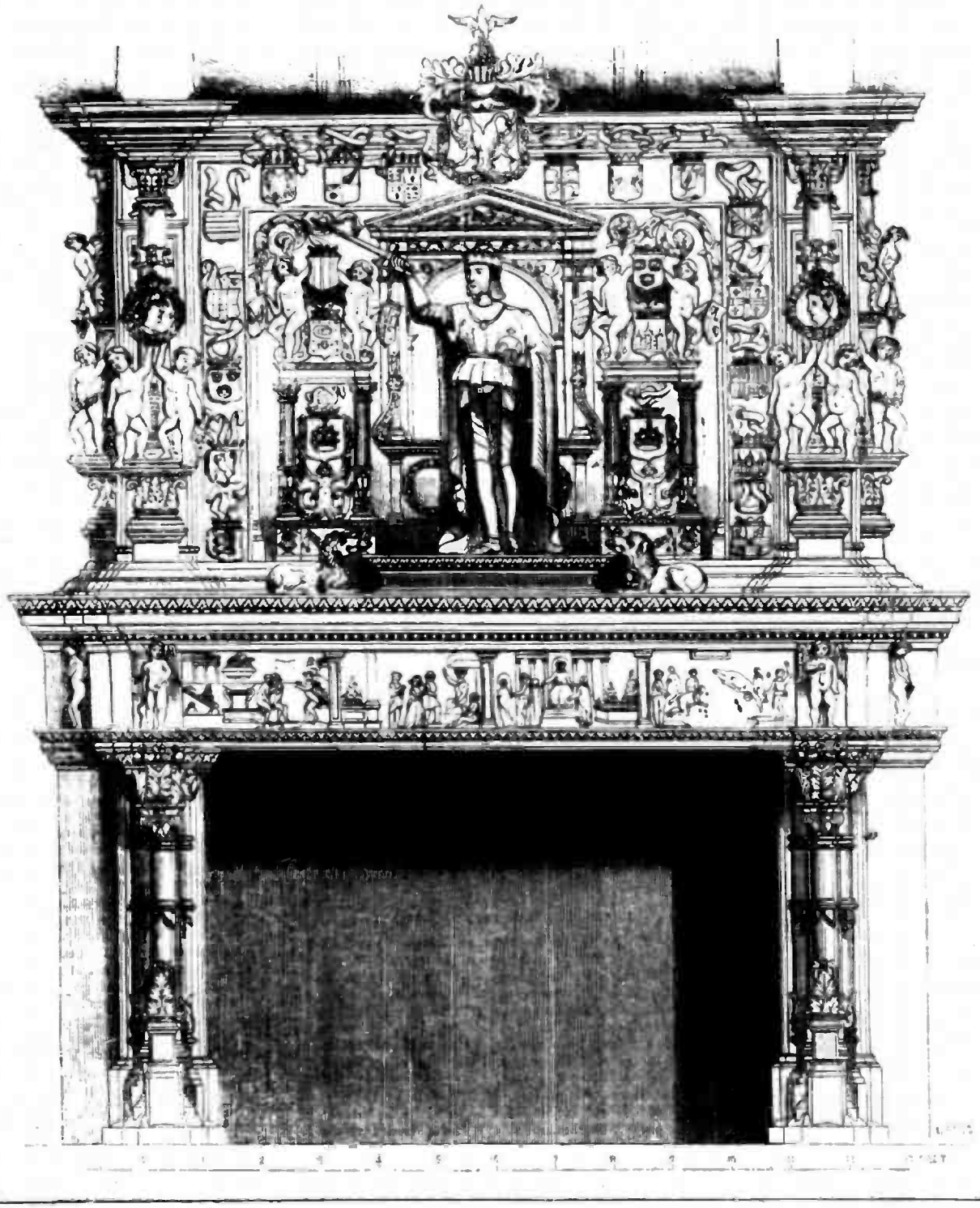
CARVED FIREPLACE IN THE "PALAIS DE JUSTICE," BRUGES.



THE PALACE OF JUSTICE AT BRUGES.

The appearance and condition of this interesting town must now be strangely different from what it was in the middle ages, when it bore the title of the Florence of West Flanders, and was well spoken of by Petrarch and other writers of the period, whether as regards historical associations, public institutions, or the succession of great men, Bruges has sent forth throughout Europe. She has fallen into comparative obscurity; still it is a place that must not be passed over lightly; there are still objects of no mean interest to command attention, and to my mind it still retains a more general air of antiquity than any other town in Belgium, and a ramble through its narrow streets, with the lofty and steep gables on either side, with here and there a house more richly decorated than its fellows, will bring to recollection some of Prout's finest drawings. No buildings will be found here comparable either as to extent or beauty with those of Brussels, Antwerp, or Ghent, yet the few that are remaining will well repay an attentive examination.

The grandest monument remaining of this once far-famed place is the church of Notre Dame, which is thus spoken of by Roscoe. "It rose to its present state from a small chapel, built by St. Boniface in 745, and dedicated to the Virgin; its length is 300 feet, and in breadth and height it is equally grand and imposing. The extent of the nave of the four lower aisles or wings, and of the swelling dome, presents a magnificent *coup d'œil*, and gives it an air at once picturesque, and of peculiar grandeur. The grand choir, in its dim religious light, the two magnificent aisles illumined by the splendour of the variegated and deep stained glass, all possess an absorbing charm to extort admiration from the coldest mind."

In this church is the monument of Charles the Bold and his daughter, Mary of Burgundy, the two last sovereigns of Flanders: it is a very rich and elaborate composition, but not equal in purity of design to many works of the preceding century. In the nave, near the entrance to the choir, stands a pulpit carved in oak, and in the same style as those generally found in Belgium.

But it is in the Palace of Justice that the most elaborate specimen of wood-carving is to be found. The exterior is modern, and presents little worthy of notice; but the room, known as the chamber of Charles the Fifth, well deserves attentive study. The whole of one side is covered by the most elaborate carving. The centre is occupied by the chimney-piece, shewn in the engraving, the lower stage of which is worked out of black marble, with the exception of the cupids and bas-reliefs (representing the history of Susannah), which are of statuary marble. The figure in the centre is intended to represent the Emperor Charles the Fifth; above him are

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